How to Install AK-47 Receiver Rivets The Easy Way

How to Rivet the Easy Way (for the average guy without alot of shop tools)

Rivets are great. They look factory but unfortunately they're a real pain for the average guy with no shop press or rivet press equiptment. Personally, I like bolts but if you're set on doing it like the factory did and you gotta have the rivets in there mounting the receiver to those trunion blocks, this is the easiest way I've found.

First, you're gonna need some rivets. You can buy an AK-47 or AK-74 rivet kit from several places. (of course I'd be tickled if you purchased one from AKParts.com but that's up to you, we do carry US Made Rivets only) anyhow, the main thing to look for is US MADE RIVETS ONLY . The import rivets look crappy and most are pitted terribly on the heads. The US made rivets are harder but are nice and smooth with no pitting. The US Rivets are tougher to distort too. If you've built with the import rivets before, you know that if you press too much, the head will mush up and even go sideways. ugh..looks terrible. At the least, you'll have smiley faces on the rivet heads and that just screams tacky. So, usually that means drilling the rivet out and starting from scratch again. If you're building an AK-47 from a kit, and you're going to the trouble to build it with rivets, you want it to look good.

OK, we got the rivets. Now first the rear trunion block (where the buttstock is gonna be mounted) There are a couple of different methods here. With the first one you can drill the old rivets out all the way thru and use 2 long rivets (it's best to use a drill press here but you can use a hand drill if you're careful)

OR, the better way is to drill down about .080 to .100 less than the length of your rivet and use 4 short rivets. Either way the bit size you use should be within a few thousandths of an inch of the rivet diameter. A 5/32 bit will work fine for most rivet kits. Personally, I prefer using 4 short rivets. With the 4 short rivet method you'll get nice button head rivets on both sides of the receiver. From what I've seen, most of the AK-47 rivet kits from other dealers have 2 flat head long rivets which is a mistake. Flat head rivets look crappy and definitely don't look factory. The 4 short button head rivet method is the way to go but we also include 3 long button head rivets in the new kits now.

Next, we're gonna need to make a rivet tool to do it right. We'll need a piece of steel, round or square stock roughly 1/2" to 3/4" in diameter and about 4" to 6" in length. It needs to be flat on both ends. Mark one end in the center with a punch and use a 17/64 th drill bit to drill a small pocket into the end you marked. You don't have to drill very deep. This pocket is for our rivet head to rest in while we install it. This will keep our nice button head rivet from distorting during the installation process. Now, I have found if you have an old Briggs lawnmower engine you've been meaning to toss out, the small end of the crankshaft is about perfect for installing rivets. It's already drilled with a depression and it's also hardened steel. So, a little scrounging and a hacksaw or dremel cut off tool can get you a ready made rivet tool. If you're a perfectionist, you can also make a nice base out of some flat stock about 1/4" thick X 12" long X about 4" wide. Lay your AK-47 receiver flat on it and mark the trunion rivet holes, then drill some depressions to support the rivet button heads of the rivets on the underside as you install. I'm sure you get the idea. I have made flat places on one side by accident before. After pain stakingly installing all the rivets with no damage to the button heads, the last rivet I installed on one side pressed a little harder and I had one whole side of rivets with flat places in the center of the buttons. It was a learning experience.

The tool is made, the holes are drilled, we have rivets, we made sure our rivets will fit easily into the holes we drilled, now let's grab the torch. You can use a cheap propane torch available almost anywhere for $10 or so but a big shop torch is faster. Grab the rivet with a nice pair of insulated pliars, a leather glove is a nice thing to have here too. Heat the rivet shank (not the head) until it's RED. Use your pliars to install it in the hole, place your tool you made on the top of the button head and slowly press with a shop press OR gently tap the tool with a hammer. It won't take much pressure with the rivet red hot. It'll squish in the hole easily, just make sure you tap the rivet head all the way down until

it touches the receiver. Let it cool, and you're ready for your next rivet. Remember, the object is to distort the shank of the rivet at the bottom. We have to make it bigger at the bottom so it won't come out of the hole. Do one on the left side of the receiver, then one on the right. Make sure the receiver or trunion block does not move and the holes are still aligned during each rivet installation.

Repeat the procedure for the barrel trunion block. You can use the barrel as a bucking block and leave it in place or you can press it out if you have a shop press. It's best to press the barrel out, install the rivets , then press the barrel back in place. But if you don't have a shop press, for many. it's easier just to drill the holes correctly, and leave the barrel in place. Watch the depth of your drill and don't drill into the barrel. Some of the competitors AK-47 rivet kits include trunion rivets that are too long. Careful Careful here. Too long will make your rivet head go crooked, too short will make your rivet not squish enough at the bottom to hold in place. You'll mess up fewer rivets if you can press the barrel out. Keep some extra rivets laying around if you must leave the barrel in place as a bucking block.You may have to drill one or two back out until you get the hang of installing them. (that's why our rivet kits include extra rivets) If you can remove the barrel, use a punch or an air hammer to distort the bottom of the rivet shanks.

The lower 2 rivets in the front barrel trunion and the trigger guard rivets are the easiest. You can easily get to the inside with a punch to expand the rivet shank. (or if you want to make another tool like a small spacer that fits inside this area of the barrel trunion between the rivet shank ends, and skip the punch that's good too. and more professional) Heating the rivets is the way to go, but you can press them cold or even hammer them in cold. You'll be more likely to rough up the button heads without the heat though. Remember, if you make a mistake don't panic. It's better to go back and drill out a bad rivet than to have a shoddy looking build. About anyone can cold hammer rivets and get them tight but they'll have flat, distorted, or crooked heads that look ugly. The art is to install them so they look good. This rivet installation method is one of the ways I do it and the easiest by far for the common man with a limited tool budget.If you wanna go all out and buy a press and need some rivet jigs, send me an email at cben@scrtc.com and we'll get you fixed up. Of course this is for informational purposes only. You're welcome to copy or print this info and pass it on as long as it's shared at no charge to others.
Thanks, Chris